UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ECE/1351
14 February 1997

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fifty-second session
(Provisional Agenda item 5(b))

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Note by the Executive Secretary

The way by which the Commission exercises its oversight responsibility on the programme of work has been changed by the Plan of Action. This implies that consideration and approval of the programme of work, as traditionally presented each year to the annual session of the Commission, is no longer necessary. As a consequence, it is proposed that the document submitted to the Commission be revised and streamlined accordingly.

It is recommended that the Commission approve these proposals.

1. The Plan of Action provides that while Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) are given the responsibility of deciding on their programme of work within the resource base allocated to them, the Commission has an oversight responsibility which it exercises by defining the substantive orientations of the overall programme of work, by determining and updating the balance among the subprogrammes within a given resource base, and by arbitrating among competing requests from PSBs when required. The Commission will adjust its programme of work at least every two years, prior to the preparation of the next programme budget. (See in particular Chapter III. C of the Plan of Action, E/ECE/1347).

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2. By way of the reform process undertaken in 1996, the Commission has achieved the above in respect of the forthcoming 1998-1999 biennium. Annex II to the Plan of Action provides the list of programme elements by sector and the percentage of resources to be allocated to each sector. The detailed programme of work of each PSB is therefore not annexed to the present note.

3. In future, the Commission will exercise its oversight responsibility through the mechanism described in Chapter III. C(b) of the Plan of Action; i.e. it will, in the Autumn prior to the preparation of the programme budget, take a decision on the recommendations formulated by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work on adjustments and shifts in the ECE programme of work. In this connection, the Group of Experts will have before it the programmes of work of the PSBs. These could also be made available to the Commission before it acts on the Group's recommendations, and further modified in the light of any decisions taken by the Commission.

4. The above provisions, i.e. the oversight responsibility of the Commission and the responsibility given to PSBs to decide on their programme of work, imply that consideration and approval of the programme of work as traditionally presented each year to the annual session of the Commission, pursuant to resolution 5 (XXIV), is no longer necessary. As a consequence, the Note to be submitted to the Commission would no longer reproduce the programme of work of each PSB. It would, however, continue to provide information on the provisional schedule of the regular meetings of the PSBs, as well as comparative data on the number of meetings held by ECE and its documentation.

5. It is recommended that the Commission approve this new approach.

6. With regard to the ECE pattern of meetings, the General Assembly in its resolution 51/206 approved the Calendar of Conferences and Meetings for 1997, which contains provision for the holding of the fifty-second session of the Commission in April 1997. The following tentative schedule for the regular meetings of its Principal Subsidiary Bodies has been established, in accordance with the decisions taken by those bodies, for the period between the fifty-second and fifty-third sessions of the Commission. This schedule includes the final sessions of the Working Party on the Chemical Industry and the Working Party on Steel, which will take place pursuant to paragraph 9 of the note on implementation of the ECE reform (E/ECE/1354). In conformity with the provisions of the Plan of Action, as of 1998 all PSBs will hold their respective annual session during the period January-September.

Committee on Environmental Policy	26-30 May	1997
Conference of European Statisticians	10-12 June	
Committee on Human Settlements	15-17 September	
Working Party on the Chemical Industry	1-3 October	
Timber Committee	6-9 October	
Working Party on Steel	29-31 October	
Committee on Sustainable Energy	5-7 November	
Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development	9-11 December	
Inland Transport Committee	12-16 January	1998

Meetings and study tours

7. In 1996 the ECE held a total of 663 half-days of meetings serviced by the United Nations. Of these half-days of meetings, 32 were held outside Geneva, 34 were for meetings of ECOSOC bodies on the transport of dangerous goods and 47 were for meetings of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. In addition 55 half-days of meetings were held outside Geneva with services provided by the host authorities. For purposes of comparison the equivalent figures for the period 1990-1996 are given below:

	Geneva UN interpretation	Outside Geneva UN interpretation	Outside Geneva Host authorities interpretation
1990	755	73	91
1991	651	20	113
1992	556	24	104
1993	598	8	94
1994	615	34	92
1995	655	16	62
1996	631	32	55

8. The meetings held outside Geneva in 1996 under the auspices of the Commission took place at the invitation of the Governments of the following countries: Canada (1); France (1); Germany (1); Hungary (3); Italy (2); Luxembourg (3); Netherlands (1); Norway (1); Poland (1); Portugal (2); Romania (3); Russian Federation (1); Slovakia (1); Switzerland (1); United States (1); and at the invitation of OECD (1).

9. The Commission may wish to bear in mind that such meetings are organized only if the subsidiary body concerned has accepted an invitation extended by the host Government and that this decision is clearly reflected in the report of the body concerned. Moreover, the host Government is obliged, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/202, to bear the additional costs of meetings attributable to the venue being away from the Commission's headquarters.

10. During 1996, 54 workshops were held to assist countries in transition to a market economy. These workshops are usually informal meetings with facilities and support provided by host Governments and/or sponsoring organizations (see E/ECE/1348). Workshops were held in or with the support of the following countries in 1996: Austria, Belarus (2), Bulgaria (3), Croatia, Czech Republic (2), France, Germany (2), Hungary, Kakzakstan, Poland (4), Portugal, Romania (4), Russian Federation (5), Slovakia (4), Spain, Slovenia (2), The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey (2), Ukraine, United Kingdom (2), Uzbekistan,and ECE (11).

Documentation

11. The following data (in terms of pages reproduced in the three working languages of the Commission) have been compiled and supplied by the Statistical Unit of the Editorial and Documents Control Section of the United

Nations Office at Geneva. For purposes of comparison, the equivalent figures for the period 1990-1996 have been provided:

Year	Total physical pages reproduced in English, French and Russian
1990	96,642
1991	94,988
1992	88,905
1993	96,373
1994	91,062
1995	94,131
1996	89,148

12. The income derived from ECE publications issued in 1996 was approximately $120,000. In addition, publications sold in 1996 but issued prior to 1996 (mainly 1995) generated approximately $30,000.